

NOW OR NEVER

Are we to live or perish for ever ?

By

CHODHARY RAHMAT ALI, M.A., LL.B., Barrister-at-Law

Founder, Pakistan National Movement

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Address in England, 16, Montague Road, Cambridge

3, MUMBERSTONE ROAD,
CAMBRIDGE.

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Dear Sir,

I am enclosing herewith an appeal on behalf of the thirty million Muslims of PAKSTAN, who live in the five Northern Units of India—Punjab, N.W.F.P. (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sindh and Baluchistan, embodying their inexorable demand for the recognition of their separate national status, as distinct from the rest of India, by the grant of a separate Federal Constitution on social, religious, political and historical grounds.

May I venture to request you to acquaint me please with your valuable opinion as to the proposed solution of this great Indian problem as explained herein.

I do hope and trust that, vitally interested as you are in the permanent solution of this problem, the objects outlined in the appeal will meet with your fullest approval and active support.

Yours truly,

RAHMAT ALI,

(Choudhary).

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Are We to Live or Perish for Ever?

At this solemn hour in the history of India, when British and Indian statesmen are laying the foundations of a Federal Constitution for that land, we address this appeal to you, in the name of our common heritage, on behalf of our thirty million Muslim brethren who live in PAKISTAN—by which we mean the five Northern units of India, viz.: Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan—for your sympathy and support in our grim and fateful struggle against political crucifixion and complete annihilation.

Our brave but voiceless nation is being sacrificed on the altar of Hindu Nationalism not only by the non-Muslims, but to the lasting disgrace of Islam, by our own so-called leaders, with reckless disregard to our future and in utter contempt of the teachings of history.

The Indian Muslim Delegation at the Round Table Conference have committed an inexcusable and prodigious blunder. They have submitted, in the name of Hindu Nationalism, to the perpetual subjection of the ill-starred Muslim nation. These leaders have already agreed, without any protest or demur and without any reservation, to a Constitution based on the principle of an All-India Federation. This, in essence, amounts to nothing less than signing the death-warrant of Islam and its future in India. In doing so, they have taken shelter behind the so-called Mandate

from the community. But they forgot that suicidal Mandate was framed and formulated by their own hands. That Mandate was not the Mandate of the Muslims of India. Nations never give Mandates to their representatives to barter away their very soul; and men of conscience never accept such self-annihilating Mandates, if given—much less execute them. At a time of a crisis of this magnitude, the foremost duty of saving statesmanship is to give a fair, firm and fearless lead, which, alas, has been persistently denied to eighty millions of our so-religionists in India by our leaders during the last seventy-five years. These have been the years of false issues, of lost opportunities and of utter blindness to the most essential and urgent needs of the Muslim interests. Their policy has throughout been nerveless in action and subservient in attitude. They have all along been paralysed with fear and doubt, and have deliberately, time and again, sacrificed their political principles for the sake of opportunism and expediency. To do so even at this momentous juncture is a policy of Bedlam. It is idle for us not to look this tragic truth in the face. The tighter we shut our eyes, the harder that truth will hit us.

At this critical moment, when this tragedy is being enacted, permit us to appeal to you for your practical sympathy and active support for the demand of a separate Federation—a matter of life and death for the Muslims of India—as outlined and explained below.

India, constituted as it is at the present moment, is not the name of one single country; nor the home of one single nation. It is, in fact, the designation of a State created for the first time in history, by the British. It includes peoples who have never previously formed part of India at any period of its history; but who have, on the other hand, from the dawn of history till the advent of the British, possessed and retained distinct nationalities of their own.

In the five Northern Provinces of India, out of a total population of about forty millions, we, the Muslims, constitute about thirty millions. Our religion, culture, history, tradition, economic system, laws of inheritance, succession and marriage are basically and fundamentally different from those of the people living in the rest of India. The ideals which move our thirty million brethren-in-faith living in these Provinces to make the highest sacrifices are fundamentally different from those which inspire the Hindus. These differences are not confined to the broad basic principles—far from it. They extend to the minutest details of our lives. We do not inter-dine; we do not inter-marry. Our national customs and calendars, even our diet and dress are different.

It is preposterous to compare, as some superficial observers do, the differences between Muslims and Hindus with those between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Both the Catholics and Protestants are part and parcel of one religious system—Christianity; while the Hindus and Muslim are the followers of two essentially and fundamentally different religious systems. Religion in the case of Muslims and Hindus is not a matter of private opinion as it is in the case of Christians; but on the other hand constitutes a Civic Church which lays down a code of conduct to be observed by their adherents from birth to death.

If we, the Muslims of Pakstan, with our distinct marks of nationality, are deluded into the proposed Indian Federation by friends or foes, we are reduced to a minority of one to four. It is this which sounds the death-knell of the Muslim nation in India for ever. To realise the full magnitude of this impending catastrophe, let us remind you that we thirty millions constitute about one-tenth of the whole Muslim world. The total area of the five units comprising PAKISTAN, which are our homelands, is four times that of Italy, three times that of Germany and twice that of France; and our population seven times that of the Commonwealth of Australia, four times that of the Dominion of Canada, twice that of Spain, and equal to France and Italy considered individually.

These are facts—hard facts and realities—which we challenge anybody to contradict. It is on the basis of these facts that we make bold to assert without the least fear of contradiction that we, Muslims of PAKISTAN, do possess a separate and distinct nationality from the rest of India, where the Hindu nation lives and has every right to live. We, therefore, deserve and must demand the recognition of a separate national status by the grant of a separate Federal Constitution from the rest of India.

In addressing this appeal to the Muslims of India, we are also addressing it to the two other great interests—British and Hindu—involved in the settlement of India's future. They must understand that in our conviction our body and soul are at stake. Our very being and well-being depends upon it. For our five great Northern states to join an All-India Federation would be disastrous, not only to ourselves, but to every other race and interest in India, including the British and the Hindu.

This is more especially true when there is a just and reasonable alternative to the proposed settlement, which will lay the foundations of a peaceful future for this great sub-continent; and should certainly allow of the highest development of each of these two peoples without one being subject to another. This alternative is a separate Federation of these five

predominantly Muslim units—Punjab, North-West Frontier Province (Afghan Province), Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan. The Muslim Federation of North-West India would provide the bulwark of a buffer state against any invasion either of ideas or of arms from outside. The creation of such a federation would not materially disturb the ratio of the Muslim and Hindu population in the rest of India. It is wholly to the interest of British and Hindu statesmanship to have as an ally a free, powerful and contented Muslim nation having a similar but separate Constitution to that which is being enacted for the rest of India. Nothing but a separate Federation of our homelands would satisfy us. This demand is basically different from the suggestion put forward by Doctor Sir Muhammad Iqbal in his Presidential address to the All-India Muslim League in 1930. While he proposed the amalgamation of these Provinces into a single state forming a unit of the All-India Federation, we propose that these Provinces should have a separate Federation of their own. There can be no peace and tranquillity in the land if we, the Muslims, are duped into a Hindu-dominated Federation where we cannot be the masters of our own destiny and captains of our own souls.

Do the safeguards provided for in the Constitution give us any scope to work for our salvation along our own lines? Not a bit. Safeguard is the magic word which holds our leaders spellbound, and has dulled their consciences. In the ecstasy of their hallucinations they think that the pills of safeguards can cure nation-annihilating earthquakes. Safeguards asked for by these leaders and agreed to by the makers of the Constitution can never be a substitute for the loss of separate nationality. We, the Muslims, shall have to fight that course of suicidal insanity to death. What safeguards can be devised to prevent our minority of one in four in an All-India Federation from being sacrificed on every vital issue to the aims and interests of the majority race, which differs from us in every essential of individual and corporate life? What safeguards can prevent the catastrophe of the Muslim nation smarting and suffering eternally at the frustration of its every social and religious ideal? What safeguards can compensate our nation awakened to its national consciousness for the destruction of its distinct national status? However, effective and extensive the safeguards may be, the vital organs and proud symbols of our national life, such as army and navy, foreign relations, trade and commerce, communications, posts and telegraphs, taxation and customs, will not be under our control, but will be in the hands of a Federal Government, which is bound to be overwhelmingly Hindu. With all this, how can we, the Muslims, achieve

any of our ideals if those ideals conflict—conflict as they must—with the ideals of Hindus?

The history of the last century, in this respect, is full of unforgettable lessons for us. Even one who runs may read them. To take just one instance: Despite all these safeguards and guarantees we have enjoyed in the past, the very name of our national language—URDU, even now the *lingua franca* of that great sub-continent—has been wiped out of the list of Indian languages. We have just to open the latest census report to verify it. This by itself is a tragic fall. Are we fated to fall farther? But that too is dust in the scales by comparison with the tremendous national issues involving our whole future as a nation and a power not only in India but also in the whole of Asia.

In the face of these incontrovertible facts, we are entitled to ask for what purpose are we being asked to make the supreme sacrifice of surrendering our nationality and submitting ourselves and our posterity to Non-Muslim domination? What good is likely to accrue to Islam and Muslims by going into the Federation is a thing which passes our understanding. Are we to be crucified just to save the faces of our leaders, or to bolster up the preposterous falsehood that India can be a single nation? Is it with a view to achieve [sic.] a compromise at all costs, or is it to support the illusion that Hindu nationalism is working in the interests of Muslims as well as Hindus? Irony is flattered to death by a mental muddle of such a nature and on such a scale. We have suffered in the past without a murmur and faced dangers without demur. The one thing we would never suffer is our own self-strangulation. We will not crucify ourselves upon the cross of Hindu nationalism in order to make a Hindu-holiday.

May we be permitted to ask of all those statesmen—Muslim or British or Hindu—supporting the Federal Constitution, if it is really desirable to make our nation sacrifice all that Islam has given us during the last fourteen hundred years to make India a nation? Does humanity really stand to gain by this stupendous sacrifice? We dare say that still in Islam the ancient fire glows and promises much for the future, if only the leaders would let it live. Whilst in Europe, excluding Russia, in about the same area as that of India and with about the same population, there live and prosper as many as twenty-six nations, with one and the same religion, civilisation and economic system, surely it is not only possible but highly desirable for two fundamentally different and distinct nations, i.e., Muslim and Hindu, to live as friendly neighbours in peace and prosperity in that vast sub-continent. What bitter irony is it that our leaders have not the courage to stand up and demand the minimum for our political salvation.

We are face to face with a first-rate tragedy, the like of which has not been seen even in the long and eventful history of Islam. It is not the question of a sect or of a community going down; but it is the supreme problem which affects the destiny of the whole of Islam and the millions of human beings who, till quite recently, were the custodians of the glory of Islam in India and the defenders of its frontiers. We have a still greater future before us, if only our soul can be saved from the perpetual bondage of slavery forged in an All-India Federation. Let us make no mistake about it. The issue is now or never. Either we live or perish for ever. The future is ours only if we live up to our faith. It does not lie in the lap of the gods, but it rests in our own hands. We can make or mar it. The history of the last century is full of open warnings, and they are as plain as were ever given to any nation. Shall it be said of us that we ignored all these warnings and allowed our ancient heritage to perish in our own hands?

MOHD ASLAM KHAN,
(*Khattak*).
President, Khyber Union.

RAHMAT ALI,
(*Choudhary*).

SHEIKH MOHD SADIQ,
(*Sahibzada*).

INAYAT ULLAH KHAN,
(*of Charsaddah*).
Secretary, Khyber Union.